



VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM FOR RURAL TEACHERS IN KALIMANTAN BARAT

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the prospect of developing a virtual learning forum to help rural English teachers capacity building. The forum is considered important to provide opportunities for the teachers to communicate, to share ideas and experiences, and to discuss amongst themselves and with teachers in more developed regions as well as with experts. The study was conducted qualitatively in Kalimantan Barat (West Kalimantan) province, Indonesia. The data were collected from four districts through observation and interview. A three-level classification system in qualitative survey design that consisted of unidimensional description, multidimensional description, and explanation was used to analyze the data. The study revealed that internet connection, transportation infrastructure, government regulations, and teacher readiness were important factors that would help the rural teachers develop virtual learning forums. The suitable mode that could support the forum was an asynchronous discussion forum using open social media groups. The challenge that would possibly be difficult to solve was finding highly motivated teachers to initiate and to manage the forums. The study recommends that teachers and experts from a university can mentor the motivated teacher leaders in the first year.

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menganalisis prospek pengembangan forum pembelajaran virtual untuk membantu peningkatan kapasitas guru bahasa Inggris pedesaan. Forum ini penting untuk memberikan kesempatan kepada para guru untuk berkomunikasi dan untuk berbagi gagasan dan pengalaman di antara para guru di daerah terpencil. Di samping itu, dengan forum ini para guru daerah terpencil dapat juga berdiskusi dengan para guru di daerah yang lebih maju dan dengan para pakar. Penelitian ini dijalankan secara kualitatif di provinsi Kalimantan Barat. Data dikumpulkan dari empat kabupaten melalui observasi dan wawancara. Selanjutnya, data dianalisis dengan sistem klasifikasi tiga tingkat dalam desain survei kualitatif yang terdiri atas deskripsi unidimensional, deskripsi multidimensi, dan penjelasan. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa koneksi internet, infrastruktur transportasi, peraturan pemerintah, dan kesiapan guru merupakan faktor penting yang akan membantu guru pedesaan mengembangkan forum pembelajaran virtual. Moda virtual yang cocok untuk mendukung forum ini adalah forum diskusi asinkron dengan menggunakan grup media sosial gratis. Tantangan yang mungkin sulit dipecahkan adalah menemukan guru yang bermotivasi tinggi untuk memulai dan mengelola forum. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan bahwa pada tahun pertama, guru dan pakar dari perguruan tinggi dapat membimbing pengelola forum.

Kata Kunci: *Forum Virtual; Guru Pedalaman; Pengembangan Profesi; Survei Kualitatif*

INTRODUCTION

Continuous teacher professional development is one of the critical elements of education quality assurance and enhancement. Teachers are required to continuously improve their competencies. A study in Palangkaraya found out that students wanted teachers to be skilful, to think critically, to be creative, and to be innovative (Norahmi, 2017). Committed teachers should be prepared, sustain their commitment, and advance their performance (Hariri & Sumintono, 2020). In rural areas, where infrastructures and facilities are very limited, teachers are the central factor in education. However, as we observed, it was not easy for rural teachers in Kalimantan Barat (Indonesia) to go to learning centers in town to improve their quality competences. Kalimantan Barat is a province that is located in the western part of Kalimantan (Borneo) island, and the capital city is Pontianak. To be able to learn together in such a situation, the teachers must have learning communities that consist of separated members and are connected through online communication.

It is not tenable to use one definition of "rural" to be applied to different studies or decision making. In an extensive study, a group of researchers reminded investigators to thoroughly describe the rural nature of their investigation from their conceptual point of view and stated their preference for an operational definition to situating the findings of their investigation over the other definitions (Koziol et al., 2015). This explanation is in line with the concept of distance in distant education. The term 'distance' can be understood from various perspectives: geographical, time, and intellectual (Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2015). The term 'rural area' in this research is mainly a geographical concept; that means the areas need particular effort to reach and to communicate with people in other areas. This research focuses on the first perspective, that is geographical distance. Many studies have been conducted worldwide about distance education for rural participants.

We found many rural areas in Kalimantan Barat, but we only chose four districts. The two districts in Kubu Raya County (Batu Ampar and Terentang) were chosen because they can represent southern and eastern parts that are not border areas. Two districts in Sambas County (Sajingan Besar and Paloh) were chosen to represent northern areas and border areas. Batu Ampar is located far from the capital of the province (Pontianak City), in the south part of Kalimantan Barat. The district can only be reached by motorboat or by speed boat.

In the context of Indonesian education, as required by Act Number 14/2005, there are four competencies that every teacher must improve, namely: pedagogical competency, personality competency, professional competency, and social competency. In an attempt to improve the teachers' competencies, the government has launched some programs that can be taken by teachers. However, the government resources cannot reach every teacher nation-wide because of the significant number of teachers and the geographical situation. Teachers in rural areas cannot get access to the program as easily as urban teachers. One of the solutions that they can find is teachers' virtual learning or online teacher forums.

The aim of approaching online community is to consider the best way to design the desired social and learning environment by utilizing the existing tools and contexts. However, it is essential to find the best structure of social and technical factors that creates the most suitable online learning community in certain circumstances (Haythornthwaite & Andrews, 2011). Community culture plays a crucial role in the success of an online forum (Jo Shan Fu & Fu, 2013). Virtual learning forums are extensions of conventional learning that potentially can be used to improve participants' higher-order thinking and communication skills (Seethamraju, 2014).

One of the difficulties in starting distance learning is establishing an efficient mode of communication using technological resources. Online learning must be supported by frequent physical meetings (Nunes, Nobre, & Passos, 2016). However, with good leadership, online learning communities can be organized successfully (Ruggieri, Boca, & Garro, 2013) (Chua, Chua, & Chua, 2017). Transformational leadership—that concentrates on intrinsic motivation and role-modelling—is found to be a useful model in online learning forum (Alotebi, Alharbi, & Masmali, 2018).

Online learning forums can help enhance conventional learning, particularly when the participants are fully engaged in the forums (Simonson et al., 2015) (Alzahrani, 2017). Mentors and leaders can help rural teachers through dialogic reflexivity (Willis, Crosswell, Morrison, Gibson, & Ryan, 2017). The members who engaged in fruitful collaboration prioritized encouraging social interaction over completing the task (the process is more important than the final product) (Vinagre, 2017). To be able to get engaged in an online forum, a teacher needs conceptual and procedural competencies that can be gained through modelling and exploratory practices in their training (Vinagre, 2017).

Concerning rural teacher development, a study involving 427 participants in Taiwan reported that the Taiwan government could successfully decrease the Rural-Urban Knowledge Divide in higher education (Chen & Liu, 2013). Reported in 2015, a study in Kentucky found the collaboration amongst the professional development service providers, the organizations that gathered the data, and the scholarly community in content-based teacher development programs had positive impacts on students' learning outcomes in rural areas. (Barrett, Cowen, & Troske, 2015). A study participated in by 308 high school teacher respondents showed that most Indonesian teachers were ready to do mobile learning. They had a positive attitude toward utilizing technology and hoped to be able to get experience in mobile training or learning (Yusri, Goodwin, & Mooney, 2015). In Spain, it was found that elementary teachers believed that it was essential to facilitate access to information and to increase engagement and the teachers' perception of the effectiveness of Apps for learning was influenced by how they chose Apps. The study also concluded that the configuration of the affordances of Apps and mobile technology could increase aspects of learning (Domingo & Garganté, 2016).

Professional development was closely related to the professions' collective autonomy, not just a matter of the teachers' individual quality (Hermansen, 2017). In line with the advanced development of information technology, amongst positive trends of online collaboration (telecollaboration) is the increasing demand

for its use as a means of educator professional development (Lewis, 2017). Then, a comprehensive survey found that it was possible to conduct professional development for rural teachers in Oklahoma (Peltola, Haynes, Clymer, McMillan, & Williams, 2017). A recent study in Japan evaluated the effectiveness of blended learning of English. The findings demonstrated the students' general contentment with the course, the educational and technical difficulties that they encountered, and the suggested solutions. The quality matter (QM) peer review showed the course failure to meet the essential standards (Alizadeh, Mehran, Koguchi, & Takemura, 2019).

This article reports an investigation into the opportunity of developing online forums for rural English teachers in Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia. The focus is chosen because before conducting a teacher professional development program, it is indispensable to find out whether a particular program can potentially be conducted for a particular group of teachers. The primary purposes of writing this article are to find out if it will be possible to help teachers develop their professional capacity through the online forums and to identify the challenge in developing the forums. The researchers answered problems by discussing the required situation that they described in the theoretical framework and the actual social situation that they described in the findings of the research.

METHOD

The design of this research is a qualitative survey research method. It was Jansen who introduced the concept of "qualitative survey" to refer to the study of diversity in a population (Jansen, 2010). It is not a study of distribution in the manner of quantitative survey do. Variation in populations is defined and investigated qualitatively. Instead of aiming at establishing frequencies, means, and other parameters, this method determines the diversity of topics of interest in a given population. This method does not count the number of populations that have the same characteristic but establishes the meaningful variation in the population, namely relevant dimensions and values.

The subjects of this research are English teachers, school principals, school inspectors, and English teacher trainers (university lecturers) in Kalimantan Barat province. Most respondents live and work in two counties in the province except for those who live and work in Pontianak city, as well as some teacher trainers who were the academic staff of Universitas Tanjungpura.

This research draws upon the situation and the practices of using information technologies for rural teachers' professional development in four rural districts in Kalimantan Barat province, namely Sajingan Besar district and Paloh district in Sambas county and Batu Ampar district and Terentang District in Kubu Raya county. The researcher conducted observations of government regulation documents, namely: constitution, acts, and other relevant legal products about education. In addition, the data of the government regulations, the transportation infrastructures, the information technologies facilities, and some schools' administrations and facilities were also part of the observation. The researcher supported collected data by interviewing English teachers and school principals. Last, we also interviewed school inspectors and relevant teacher trainers at Universitas Tanjungpura.

The data in this research are mostly qualitative. To assure the quality of the data, we followed the following protocols. The documents that we observed were collected only from legal and valid sources. The internet connections, school facilities, school programs, and transportation were observed and rechecked properly. The detailed information about school programs, teachers' habits in using the internet, and other teachers' professional development programs were collected through direct interview and crosschecks with teachers, headmasters, and school inspectors. The data of the lecturers' and the experienced teachers' activities relevant to rural teachers' quality improvement were collected through direct interviews, direct observation of their offices, and detailed observation of the government regulations relevant to this research. When the data had been organized, the researcher discussed and reconfirmed the data with the interviewees after organizing them.

The data were analyzed using the three-level classification system of qualitative survey data analysis (Jansen, 2010). Level one was the unidimensional description. To start with, we limited the object of this analysis; that is the possibility of developing discussion forums for English teacher professional development in four districts and the possible challenge. Then, we analyzed the four most relevant dimensions—namely government regulations, transportation and telecommunication, schools' plans and programs, and teachers' readiness—to find the values within each dimension. The analysis was not, then, focused on the differences between the four districts but the diversities that existed in the four districts. Level two was the multidimensional description. This step consists of qualitative correlational analyses of the four dimensions that are supported by the qualitative correlational analyses of the values within the dimensions. Level three was an explanation. Based on the qualitative correlational analyses, we explained how the English teachers in the four districts were ready to get involved in online or virtual English teacher learning forums.

FINDINGS

English Teachers in Rural Areas

The analysis of the data about English teachers in rural areas are presented based on the government regulations, transportation and internet connection schools' plans and programs, and teachers' readiness.

Government Regulations

The documents of the national regulations that are related to online forum development consist of the constitution, acts, government regulations, and ministerial regulations. All implementations in the lower levels should refer to those regulations. The 1945 Constitution mandates the government to provide quality education for all people of Indonesia. Then, the national education system act (Act No. 20/2003) describes the system, budgeting, management, and other requirements to provide national education services. More specifically, Government Regulation Number 19/2005 mandates eight standards of national education, and one of them is the standard of educators. Minister of Government Official Alignment and Bureaucracy Reform Number 16/2009 requires educator quality standards and professional development. The Minister of Communication

and Information Regulation Number 2/2008 regulates that one telecommunication tower should be used together by telecommunication providers and Number 19/2010 regulates how internet services should reach every district in the country. Meanwhile, Act Number 4/2014 guarantees that every village will receive a significant amount of money to build infrastructure and facilities and to manage the village.

It is very important that every school nationwide, including every school in the four districts, has to implement regulations at all levels. The implementation of the regulations is supervised by local governments and assessed by the National Body of Accreditation for Schools and *Madrasahs*. Every mandate that is written in the constitution, the acts, the government regulations, and the ministers' regulations are excerpted into the government instruments of supervision and the instruments of accreditation assessments that are used by the National Body of Accreditation for Schools and *Madrasahs*. A school principal is subject to discharged if he/she intentionally neglects a single item of regulation.

Transportation and Internet Connection

The four rural districts in this research are located in one of the largest provinces of the country and are located far away from the capital city of the province. Teachers need to travel about six to eight hours by land transportation from Sajingan Besar and Paloh to the provincial office of education; 3-4 hours by motorcycle plus 3-4 hours by bus. Most schools in these two areas were on the main roads, and there was no difficulty for teachers or students in going to schools. Whereas, travelling from Pontianak to Terentang or from Pontianak to Batu Ampar takes about 3-8 hours by motorcycle plus by speedboat. Teachers and government officials move from point to point in rural areas by boat and motorcycle. The roads in rural areas are muddy, and motorcycles cannot pass by in rainy seasons.

An Internet connection and telephone were available in the areas near communication towers (usually near the district offices), and the internet speed is low to average. Video conferences or webinars can be done only in certain areas. It was possible, but not always, to get connected to the internet at schools. People could watch television broadcasts; but, in certain areas, they need a parabola antenna.

The schools in the four districts had minimal computer facilities. There were only three computer laboratories found in those four districts, namely at a private vocational high school in Batu Ampar, at a state junior high school in Terentang, and a state vocational school in Sajingan Besar. However, not all of them could work well, and it was difficult for teachers to use the lab for professional development. In Terentang, for example, eleven of sixteen units were broken, and the lab could not function. Then, even though the condition was not good enough, the computer laboratories in Batu Ampar and Sajingan Besar were used by the students. It was not easy to find empty slots in the computer lab schedule when the English teachers were free.

Schools' Plans and Programs

In elementary and secondary levels, the Indonesian education system provides general education (schools) that are controlled by the Ministry of

Education and Culture (MoEC) and Islamic education (*madrasahs*) that are controlled by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). Every school and madrasah used the national curriculum and operated in a school-based management system under local government supervision. There were also schemes of financial support provided by national and local governments public schools (local governments do not support *madrasahs*). Public schools and madrasahs are not allowed to collect any type of fee from the students. Private schools are founded and run by non-government organizations (NGOs). There are also schemes of financial support by the central government and local governments to private schools.

Schools were required to have some kind of vision and mission. Some of the schools broke them down into operational programs, but many did not. There was no single school or madrasah with teacher professional development through e-learning, although the headteachers and the teachers were aware that they needed to improve themselves amid the lack of access. Most school visions and programs were student-oriented, and curriculum-oriented and were written mostly for accreditation requirements.

There is at least one English teacher at every school. In more established schools, most teachers were permanent teachers that hold an undergraduate degree in English language teaching and have the status of the professional teacher. It is also found that in new junior high schools and *madrasahs* in very rural areas of Kubu Raya county, most teachers were elementary school teachers that graduated from non-English language teaching programs. They were situated in more difficult areas to access and had little possibility to visit more developed areas regularly. Public general school teachers and headmasters of senior high schools (year 10-12) are supervised by province education services and junior high schools (year 1-9) are supervised by county education services. Teachers of *madrasahs* are supervised by MoRA.

It is also found that there have been attempts to improve the English teachers' capacity. Most schools sent their teachers for capacity building programs when the government invited them. In this case, most of the government programs of teacher development were conducted conventionally. They invited teachers to a city or other venue and provided trainers; most trainers were government officials. Two headmasters were found to have done creative programs of training teachers to operate computers and to help teachers buy a laptop by instalments. However, it happened only once.

Teachers' Readiness

School teachers in Indonesia are categorized into four, namely: teachers with a certificate of professional teachers, permanent civil servant teacher, permanent private foundation teacher, and non-permanent teacher. The highest prestige amongst them are teachers that have obtained a certificate of professional teacher after they pass the program of professional teacher education and assessment. Teachers of this type are awarded a certificate of professional teacher and granted professional allowance besides a standard salary. Their obligations are working 24-hour per week as a professional teacher and fulfilling other standard requirements as a professional teacher, like writing research articles, attending or speaking in seminars, and developing teaching aids or materials. The

certified English teachers in this four districts usually have better proficiency in English than other teachers and good knowledge of teaching methodology.

Meanwhile, the other types of English teachers in the districts have not passed the certified teacher requirements. A civil servant teacher is usually undergraduate in English teaching who has passed a set of selection process. Most of them have active English skills. They received a standard salary of a civil servant and must work 24-hour per week. A permanent private foundation teacher is a teacher that is hired fully by a private foundation to work at a school that is run by the foundation. A non-permanent teacher is a part-time teacher paid by the school per teaching hour.

Most certified (professional) English teachers worked for public schools in district centers while English teachers in rural areas were mostly novice teachers. Some English teachers in private rural areas were non-permanent inexperienced young persons who did not finish studying in an English education department or English language academy or teachers of other subjects that were assigned to teach English. In some public and private junior high schools and madrasas, the English teachers were teachers of elementary schools who were neither educated nor qualified to teach English. They teach English in Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian national language) because they have very low English proficiency and need training in English teaching methodology.

About two-thirds of the English teachers were computer-literate and internet-connected persons; the others were not. Those who were computer-literate were teachers who could go to internet-spot areas near district offices on workdays or could go home in town on the weekends. They used their computer or gadgets to communicate online. In town, they were supported with 12-hour or 24-hour electricity and a relatively slow internet connection and could learn from internet sources and social media using laptop/desktop computers and gadgets. Most of them communicate mainly through social media and social media groups. For official communication, they often used email, and they keep their data on the email and back them up with virtual drive and offline drives. No one has started developing an online learning forum for them. They have no idea of how to organize and how to find resources.

Most teachers attended workshops and other professional development meetings only if the school sent them. Usually not many opportunities were offered to them and not quite sufficient to improve their competencies. In the workshops, they usually met their colleagues and ex-classmates and shared their experiences. Some of those teachers went to conferences organized by universities and attended discussions organized by English teacher forums that they call *Musyawahar Guru Mata Pelajaran* (MGMP).

Some teachers who worked far away from the center of districts or were geographically isolated got difficulty to improve their competencies. It is difficult for them to get connected to online activities because they were not connected to the internet or cellular spots. They did not know or were not even eager to know how to use the internet, computer, or even android. They updated their knowledge through radio broadcasts and headteachers' briefings. Local conventional English teachers' forums did not work well because of the geographical and transportation constraints.

In the capital city of Kalimantan Barat province, there are some lecturers or teacher trainers and experienced teachers who might have been able to help improve the rural teachers' quality. They mostly work in universities and colleges and more developed schools. Some of them also served as teacher tutors and school inspectors. As required by regulations, lecturers should do social work and research as part of their professional development. Some groups of lecturers of the education and teacher training faculty went to rural areas to help improve the rural teachers' quality. However, so far, the rural teachers could not benefit from this situation. The university experts and the experienced teachers could not facilitate the rural teachers learn intensively and extensively because the experts and the teachers could visit the rural teachers in a short while. Besides they ought to get back to their office soon, they also ought to spend much of their time on the way to the rural areas.

Since they attended professional development meetings only once in a while and without any follow-up, the teachers' quality in those areas did not develop significantly. On the other hand, teachers in town tended to do classroom action research in their schools as a part of their professional development; and usually did not have an impact on the teachers in rural areas.

Proposed Design of the Online English Teacher Forums

From the analysis of the situation, there is a possibility to develop online forums to improve teachers' quality in the four rural districts. To overcome psychological and social challenges, the teachers may develop different and flexible forums for different smaller communities and a broader forum to make them connected with one another. The different and flexible forums will enable the teachers to communicate more confidently, and the larger group will be able to connect them with teachers in different rural areas or different levels of schools. It is an essential requirement that the teachers can get connected to the internet, have enough computers and gadgets that support internet connection, and like to attend discussion forums. The opportunity was open because the government had issued regulations that required the teachers to improve their competences, promised reward for teachers with excellent competences, and facilitated telecommunication companies to provide services to rural societies. Notwithstanding geographical and transportation difficulties, it is still possible for teachers to meet each other in offline discussion forums. Despite the inadequacy of internet facilities and strategic plans, the schools are able to send teachers for teacher development programs by the government. Specifically, the proposed design of the online English teacher forums is viewed from three aspects; synergizing online and offline activities, designing the format, and inviting external experts and mentors.

Synergizing Online and Offline Activities

To build online forums, the English teachers in the four rural districts need to synergize their online and offline activities. Topics and problems can be introduced and discussed virtually through the apps and social media that were used by the teachers. Online sources that a teacher has learned from can be shared with his/her colleagues in chat rooms or groups. MGMP can be one of the

alternative offline forums. In MGMP meetings, teachers can do more interactive and personalized discussions and can share more information. Teachers can have regular meetings in the county centers, and they will be able to organize the meeting because the organizers and the participants can discuss their preparations online before they meet. It would also be possible to support offline meetings with a webinar, but more preparation will be necessary. The synergy between the online and offline forum will be able to make the forums more productive; not only does it give complete information, but it also motivates more teachers to get involved in the forum.

Designing the Format

Asynchronous online forums for English teachers in rural areas of West Kalimantan can be developed by utilizing the available resources and by synergizing the online forum with the offline forum. The purpose of developing the forums is to make chat rooms or online learning forums to help teachers in rural areas learn from one another and interact with external resources. The forums are informal and open to every English teacher in the area. There can be more than one chat room in one area to accommodate teachers with different backgrounds and levels of competence. The community members can use different applications or social media to adjust to the members' habits. The scope of the learning topics is curriculum and materials development, professional promotion, and teachers' competency improvement.

Teachers that have a relatively intensive engagement with the internet can be the core of the members. Teachers with a certificate of professional teachers can mentor the novice and less experienced teachers. To be able to reach the teachers in very rural areas, government radio and community radio broadcasts can be good alternatives. The members can use English and Bahasa Indonesia as the medium of communication. However, the organizer and the core teachers must use Bahasa Indonesia when communicating with less experienced teachers and with teachers in very rural areas.

However, the forums need a leader or a group of leaders that can voluntarily initiate, plan, organize, actuate, and maintain the program. A small group of teachers can start the forums from a small group of connected teachers by disregarding their locations and levels of competence. These volunteers then invite other teachers to get connected with them online, organize the flow of conversations, and connect the forum with the MGMPs.

Inviting External Experts and Mentors

External experts and mentors would be able to help teachers initiate and manage online forums. Some groups of experienced urban teachers and experts that possibly can help are teacher trainers, teacher trainees, and experienced teachers in West Kalimantan or other places, including overseas teachers and teacher trainers. The external resource can play roles as resource persons, mentors, and IT supports. In the beginning, the external resource can get involved actively in the forums, but they should reduce their involvement gradually to the very minimum level; like scaffolding. It is essential to confirm at the beginning of the program that the external sources help the teachers voluntarily. It will be

beneficial if the external experts and mentors can synergize their professional program funded by their institutions and the forums' activities.

Leadership Challenges and Solutions

From the situational analysis and the proposed design, it is evident that rural education needs the presence of leadership. More importantly, strong leadership is necessary to build a new community with a strong vision to improve the quality of English education through English teachers' quality improvement. However, it is a challenge to find a teacher that can voluntarily do rigorous work while working full time

Two traditional views of leadership, a leader is born, and a leader is trained, can be good alternatives but will take much time. The third alternative is involving external resource to scaffold the development of the online forum. Through utilizing current information and communication technologies, the external experts and mentors can find motivated teachers and help them build the forums through the scaffolding process. The scaffolding process is also training given to the motivated teachers because they will learn how to build and run online discussion forums for the rural teacher when they are working with the external resource persons.

DISCUSSION

Online Activities and Physical Meetings

There should always be programs or activities that can improve teachers' quality to improve the quality of education; particularly in rural areas where there are more geographical challenges that may undermine the teachers' commitment to teaching. It is imperative to prepare, to maintain, and to improve committed teachers' commitment and performance (Hariri & Sumintono, 2020). English teachers upgrading and workshops were provided by the government but not very often and this needs to be followed up with discussions amongst the teachers. Online forums can be an excellent alternative to help the teachers improve their competencies; mainly if the teachers can participate in the forums appropriately (Simonson et al., 2015) (Alzahrani, 2017). In an online forum, the interaction and discussion process are more important than completing the task (Vinagre, 2017) because the learning processes take place when they are interacting with one another. The findings that most teachers in some rural areas could get access to the internet had laptops and android mobile phones and liked to attend seminars, and other professional development meetings could build optimism that it would be possible to build English teachers online forums for them. It can be estimated that the learning process will take place in the proposed forum as the findings also said that most teachers are also active in social media and some of them are tutors of teacher professional development programs that were recruited and trained by the government. A study that uncovered Indonesian teachers' readiness and positive attitude toward mobile learning (Yusri et al., 2015) can be an excellent support to building the online forum.

Online discussion forums need to be reinforced with physical meetings (Nunes et al., 2016). This strong suggestion can be fulfilled in Sajingan Besar and Paloh districts because most schools in those two districts are located on the main

roads, and the teachers can meet at one of the school buildings or one of the government buildings. However, in Terentang and Batu Ampar districts, only teachers that work or live near the center of the districts will be able to do so. Teachers who work and live far away from the center of the districts will not be able to attend a physical meeting or to meet one another. They even could not get connected with other English teachers online.

So far, it has been a severe problem to reach rural teachers in some parts of Terentang and Batu Ampar. Geographical distance and transportation problems have made them "isolated" from other schools and communities of the same districts. As a beginning, however, this program does not need to reach every rural teacher. The teacher community can start from small, and then can grow the forum to reach larger areas and a more significant number of teachers. It is not very important to debate whether this program is purely rural teachers' forum as some different definitions have been raised by experts. Two of them have been included above (Koziol et al., 2015) (Simonson et al., 2015). What is proposed here is a forum to help teachers that are geographically far from the main centers of education and to grow the forum little-by-little.

Telecollaborative Competencies and Content Knowledge

Teachers are required to have telecollaborative competences (procedural and conceptual) to be able to participate in an online forum (Vinagre, 2017). It will be an advantage if every English teacher in the four rural districts has adequate telecollaborative competences. The forum will run smoothly, and the members will get the maximum benefit from smooth and proper online forum activities. However, a small group of teachers that have good telecollaborative competences will be enough to initiate this forum and help their colleagues share the knowledge of telecollaboration and manage the forum voluntarily. As indicated in the findings, some teachers are already trained and recruited as teacher instructors by the government. informally They can be mentors and leaders of the forums. This way will be in-line with what was suggested in a previous study that some mentors' and leaders' assistance through dialogue reflexivity would be very helpful for the rural teacher (Willis et al., 2017).

The initiators and leaders of this proposed forum can learn from a study in Kentucky that found the benefit of collaboration amongst the professional development service providers, the organizations that gathered the data, and the scholarly community in content-based teacher development program (Barrett et al., 2015). Teacher trainers in universities and experienced teachers that work and stay in the main cities in Kalimantan Barat are potential partners to collaborate as external experts and mentors. As they are required to do research and social works for their promotions, this forum can offer collaborative activities for their research and social work that have positive impacts on the development of the forum and the rural teacher's quality improvement. The rural teachers will be able to learn conceptual competence, procedural competence, and content knowledge from the external experts and mentors through collaborative activities. It is Much more beneficial if the external experts and mentors can get involved in the online forum because the process will be less costly and the teachers can practice learning through the online forum.

Asynchronous Discussion

Asynchronous mode activities are chosen because they are flexible and enable rural teachers to participate in the forum whenever they get internet access. In a synchronous program, any participant can learn in different places and at different times (Simonson et al., 2015). As indicated in the findings, most teachers actively connect to the internet, but they need certain spots and specific times to get connected to the internet. Weekends, when they went back to their homes in towns, were the best time for them to go online. Asynchronous mode of discussions can give the teachers time to go online and to prepare responses. As they were in different levels of English proficiency and professional knowledge, members who are not confident with their knowledge and language will benefit from the extra time to respond.

In the four-district situation, asynchronous mode of discussion can be a suitable solution. The teacher can be involved in some discussions when they can find an internet connection. As indicated in a study cited above, teachers are normally motivated to improve their capacity (Norahmi, 2017) as the challenges they face day-by-day always get more complicated. This also relevant to a suggestion that committed teachers should be prepared, sustain their commitment, and advance their performance (Hariri & Sumintono, 2020).

Need for Leadership and Periodical Evaluation

The findings show that there is a challenge of leadership. So far, the internet facilities have been available, even though not 7/24 and not in most areas. The transportation infrastructure has not been a big problem for the teachers to meet and learn together. The teachers need someone or a group of people that can initiate and motivate the teachers to collaborate in a learning forum. With good leadership, online learning forums can be organized (Ruggieri et al., 2013) (Chua et al., 2017). More specifically, transformational leadership can be a useful model to make online learning forums take place (Alotebi et al., 2018). This type of leader is characterized by intrinsic motivation and role-modelling rather than by other drives.

In addition, program evaluation is always important, including in the context of developing and running the rural English teacher discussion forum. The evaluation can be conducted from various perspectives; but basically, it is essential to know if the forum needs adaptations or improvement. The leaders and mentors may learn from a study in Japan about the effectiveness of blended learning of English (Alizadeh et al., 2019). It is also essential to know if the teachers are satisfied with the program and whether the program can help improve the rural teachers' competencies.

CONCLUSION

The situation in the rural areas of Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia, particularly in the four districts of this research, supports the possibility of developing English teacher discussion forums. Four dimensions that make it possible are government regulation, transportation, internet connection, and teachers' readiness. The online discussion forum can be supported with offline meetings to result in a better contribution to the teachers' quality improvement. Teachers in some very rural

areas will not be able to participate but will get indirect benefits if the teachers in the district centers of the districts can share what they have learned from the forum with them. Developing different flexible forums that are supported with a larger forum will help reduce some teachers' nervousness but still help them get connected. Asynchronous mode of online discussion forums using social media can be an alternative to be used by the forums. The proposed model of discussion and media can overcome the internet connection problem, gaps of expertise, and psychological and social distances challenges. Teacher trainers from universities and experienced teachers can be invited as resource persons that will be able to enrich the forums and to mentor the forum administrators. A group of committed and motivated teachers can initiate and maintain the forums as participant administrators. To make the forum administration and discussion rich in materials and activities but efficient in financial expenses, the administrators can collaborate the forums' activities with the external resource persons research and social works programs.

To implement this proposal, a group of committed teachers or committed external volunteers should start the action by gathering interested teachers to join with them in an online forum and start the discussion. Teachers with transformational leadership capacities can initiate the discussion and administer the forum. Teacher trainers and experienced teachers from cities nearby (external mentors) should help the committed teachers by providing materials to discuss and advice to keep them motivated. Procedural, managerial, and leadership mentoring should be provided for free in the first year as a process of scaffolding. After that, the mentors may remove the scaffolding gradually and let the forum grow and multiply itself. The external mentors conduct development research to mentor the committed teacher leader during the initiating and scaffolding process. Periodical evaluation during the initiating and developing process can be conducted collaboratively between the leaders and external experts. In addition, the teacher leader can also collaborate with external experts, particularly when the external experts are conducting relevant research or social development programs funded by their campus or other sponsors.

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